

Dear ,

As you head into what promises to be another challenging legislative session, I want to thank you again for meeting with Northshore School Board members and me prior to the holidays. We appreciate your continued support for public education, and we value the opportunity to engage in dialogue with you. I'd like to reiterate some of the key points we discussed and affirm our offer of any assistance we can provide you in the coming months.

McCleary Ruling – Legislative action on basic education funding promises to be a central issue in the upcoming session. Please keep the following points in mind:

- Numerous studies and the State's own testimony at the McCleary trial affirm that the K-12 system is under-funded as a whole. **Please reject any proposal to increase state funding for K-12 that simply re-distributes revenues that are currently approved and collected locally.**
- School districts are service organizations; over 85% of Northshore's expenditures are in staff salaries and benefits. The biggest use of local levy funds is to bridge the increasing gap between state funded salaries and benefits and what is actually costs to attract and retain quality employees. **While compensation is clearly the most difficult issue to address in education funding reform, it must be addressed sooner rather than later.** Otherwise, in the absence of adequate state support for districts' largest expense, other funding improvements may continue to be diverted to maintain competitive, market-based compensation and not achieve the Legislature's intended outcomes. Please begin the process of compensation reform this session.
- **Funding public education by cutting the social safety net is not the answer.** Despite the dedication and talent of our staff, children do not learn when they are homeless, hungry or sick. Without adequate support systems, schools become the social service agency of last resort and are not equipped or capable of adequately fulfilling this role. Please reject any funding proposals that divert resources from vital social services to fund public education.
- **Delaying action on a budget until late spring or summer significantly compromises our ability to thoughtfully plan for and implement new programs and services.** Please make every effort to complete the legislative session on-time.

Initiative 1351 – While the goals of I-1351 are commendable (smaller classes, more teachers, increased support staff) the Initiative is an incomplete solution, presents significant challenges to local school districts, and did not come with a dedicated funding source.

- By OSPI's calculation, Northshore would gain over 600 state-funded staff positions with full implementation of I-1351, over 250 of which would be additional teachers. Without

statewide compensation reform, **those 250 teachers alone carry a local levy cost of over \$4.9 million.** The local levy cost of **funding all 600+ positions would be an additional \$7.5 million.**

- The labor market has changed dramatically in recent years; every week we see news stories about substitute teacher shortages. **There is not currently an adequate supply of high quality teachers and support staff to meet the increased staffing levels of I-1351.** Without a thoughtful, coordinated and long-term effort to attract, train and retain quality individuals, many of the new positions created by I-1351 will go unfilled or filled with inferior candidates.
- By OSPI's calculation, Northshore would need at least five additional elementary schools today to accommodate the lower K-3 class sizes. Yet **I-1351 provides no capital facility resources to add necessary classroom space.** The cost to Northshore taxpayers to acquire the property and build five new elementary schools could easily exceed \$200 million, take years to implement, and depend upon 60% voter approval of the largest bond measure in Northshore's history.

Reform Legislation – We are committed to the success of every student and are working hard each day to that end. We welcome accountability and openly share our successes and challenges with our community. We are also straining under the weight of numerous state and federal reforms enacted in recent years (if you didn't receive a reform list from me but would like to, please let me know). Please reject legislation that adds to this reform overload and **give us the opportunity to consolidate and focus on current reforms for the next several years so that we can implement them well and with fidelity.**

Thank you for your service to our community. I have great admiration and respect for the work you do and the challenges you face to meet the diverse needs of our state. Please do not hesitate to call on me if I can be of any help.

Truly,

Larry Francois, Superintendent